

SESSIONAL PAPER No. 10

THE INSTRUCTIONS OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER (WRITTEN AND VERBAL) GIVEN ME ON
APRIL 21, 1899, OUTLINED THE FOLLOWING OPERATIONS IN THE FIELD.

- (I.) *An exploration of the Skeena River northward from Hazelton to the mouth of the east branch of the Skeena, thence along this branch to the Vicinity of Fort Connolly.*

At this point a junction should be made with the work of Mr. C. F. Dibblee, who, during the winter of 1898-9, was expected to have made explorations westward from the mouth of the Omenica River towards Fort Connolly.

A personal interview with Mr. Dibblee was to be had, if possible, and his co-operation obtained in the exploration of the East Branch of the Skeena.

- (II.) *A continuation of the explorations of the Skeena River northward to its head, with the object of discovering a pass—suitable for railway construction—between its head waters and those of the Stikine River.*

My pack train and party started from Ashcroft for Hazelton, via Quesnelle, on May 20; we reached Hazelton June 30. Here we were delayed until July 5, getting the pack animals reshod, and preparing the supplies, outfit, &c., for the season's trip.

Before leaving Ashcroft, I received from the chief engineer a copy of Mr. Dibblee's report to him, dated April 1, 1899; in which Mr. Dibblee states, 'Have just finished explorations, getting back to headquarters the 30th ultimo. Have found a favourable route via Omenica, Osilinea, head waters of Skeena waters, &c.'

Mr. Dibblee's headquarters, referred to above, being at the mouth of the Omenica River, the proposed personal interview with him was now out of the question, as was also the contemplated assistance from him in exploring the East Branch of the Skeena.

Consequently, I decided to proceed directly to the head of the Main Branch of the Skeena, and explore that vicinity for a pass to the waters of the Stikine; leaving the work on the East Branch toward Fort Connolly for the latter part of the season. I was particularly influenced to adopt this programme of work, by the fact that Mr. Dupont, who had been sent out to continue my explorations on the Stikine River of 1898, southward to its head, would no doubt on reaching the divide between the Skeena and Stikine waters, be on the look out for my party, or evidences of our work. I realized too that it might be a difficult matter to connect our surveys in a wild, and wholly uninhabited territory, unless precautions were taken to reach that vicinity as early as possible, and ascertain the peculiar conditions topographically of the head waters of these rivers. As I was unable to obtain any reliable information regarding this locality, I could form no idea of the probable time required to explore for and secure the desired pass; another reason for proceeding directly to the head of the Skeena. Accordingly, I left Hazelton on July 5, making a track survey of our route, and taking barometer readings for elevation, also observations for latitude, to correct the traverse survey, as we proceeded. The most direct route to the head of the Skeena was taken. By August 8, I had discovered an excellent pass for a railway line between the head waters of the Skeena and Stikine Rivers—the divide being about 164 miles by trail from Hazelton—and had explored some 20 miles down the branch of the Stikine heading here. I then felt quite confident we were on the same branch of the Stikine River that I had explored last season, and which Mr. Dupont was this year following to its head. I was gratified to learn later on that Mr. Dupont had come directly onto my work and connected with reference posts left by me for that purpose on the banks of the Stikine, at the end of my explorations in that direction.

In taking the above-mentioned direct route to the upper Skeena, my trail left the main river about the 91st mile, and ascending to the head of a large tributary branch, passed through a low, wide valley to the head waters of the Nass River. It followed down this branch of the Nass for a few miles, then ascended by another one to an elevated unbroken watershed between the Nass and the Skeena. From here the route